

Testmony for Health and Human Services House Bill 2
Feb. 4, 2011, Room 102
Don Roberts, Chairman

Chairman Roberts, members of the Committee: thank you for letting me speak to you this day as one of the foster and adoptive parents of Montana. For the record, my name is Nancy Marks. I run a small ranch at Townsend. I work with an organization called Family Find which struggles to recruit and retain foster parents.

I have two adopted children, both teenagers now. One is working and on her own. In the eleven years my children have been with me, I have needed all the help I could get in the way of support for them.

Parents foster and adopt kids for a variety of reasons: they have already raised their own families or they are public-minded people who want to help out. Committee members, you are public-minded too. And you get paid a wage for your services to the state. Foster and adoptive parents get subsidies. The amounts are small. In the case of adoptive parents, subsidies are negotiated with the state one time only for each child – mine is \$680 a month for the child I have home. Lowering the subsidies would cause financial crisis for many of these families.

It is not an easy job to raise other people's kids. They come to us with different cultural backgrounds, often with physical disabilities and mental illness caused by abuse and neglect. Most are not ordinary children; they have very special needs. It's hard for foster and adoptive parents to deal with taking these kids to therapy, keeping them in school, and teaching them to live in society under the best of circumstances, let alone without adequate resources.

Committee members, please do not take away money we so dearly need for diapers, for clothing, for counseling, and for transportation in this rural state. We need your help; all those children need your help.

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